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Shultz plans to oppose new arms for Iran

Secretary says past information was fragmentary

By Mark Matthews

Washington Bureau of The Sun

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State George P. Shultz, avoiding any endorsement of President Reagan's decision to ship arms to Iran, said yesterday he would oppose any further direct or indirect arms shipments to that country.

He also did not deny that he had considered resigning over the affair. Asked if he had, Mr. Shultz said, "Oh, I talked to the president; I serve at his pleasure, and anything I have to say on that subject, I'd just say to him."

In his first extensive public comment on the secret 18-month U.S. effort to establish contact with moderate elements in Iran, aimed in part at freeing U.S. hostages in Lebanon, Mr. Shultz said that "my own information about the operational aspects of what was going on was fragmentary at best." The operation was mostly run from the White House.

He said President Reagan had intended for the arms shipments to be a "signal" of good faith to Iranian moderates, but said the decision itself was "debatable."

"You can argue for that — there are some good reasons why; you can argue against it. At any rate, when you get elected president, that's one of the things you get the right to do, is to make decisions of that kind."

He said Iran continues to pursue a policy of terrorism, and he opposed any further direct or indirect arms shipments.

"We gave a signal and the signal has been given, and, as far as I'm concerned, I don't see any need for

further signals," he said. "Under the circumstances of Iran's war with Iraq, its pursuit of terrorism, its association with those holding our hostages, I would certainly say, as far as I'm concerned, no."

But when asked if he had the authority to speak for the whole administration, he replied: "No."

Although Mr. Shultz refused to say whether he objected to the arms shipments authorized by President Reagan earlier this year, his comments indicated that while he favored approaching Iranian moderates, he also favored sticking firmly to the arms embargo.

Asked if allies might not just "laugh" at the U.S. contention that the embargo remains in effect and proceed to ship weapons themselves, he said:

"Probably they will. On the other hand, we have to be serious about it ourselves, and we have to reinforce it, and we have to point out to them the reason why we have that policy."

Mr. Shultz's comments, on CBS' "Face the Nation," came as the congressional furor over the arms shipments continued despite administration efforts, including the president's address to the nation Thursday, to persuade the public that it was not engaged in an arms-for-hostages swap.

In related statements yesterday:

□ Vice Adm. John Poindexter, the president's national security adviser, was asked if there are other secret intelligence operations about which Congress has not been informed and replied that "there are none."

□ Admiral Poindexter also confirmed that the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. William J. Crowe Jr., was not aware of the secret arms shipments. He said this was not unusual, since it was "not a military operation."

□ House Majority Leader Jim Wright, D-Texas, said, "It appears laws have been broken" in the ad-

ministration's failure to notify Congress of the operation until very recently. Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., while saying, "The law is very, very ambiguous," said that the 11-month delay in notifying Congress of the arms shipments did not comply with the requirement that the administration notify Congress "in a timely fashion" of a covert action.

□ Mr. Leahy and West Virginia's Sen. Robert Byrd, the Senate Democratic leader, kept up their criticism of the operation yesterday, with Mr. Leahy calling it "a fiasco" and Mr. Byrd saying it was "a massive political blunder."

The House and Senate intelligence committees both are expected to hold hearings Friday on U.S.-Iran contacts.

Mr. Shultz's comments maintained the distance with the White House on the Iran operation that his spokesman laid out Friday when he said Mr. Shultz "was consulted on the general policy. . . . He was not directly involved, although he was sporadically informed of some details."

There have been repeated reports that Mr. Shultz opposed the arms deal. While the State Department denied last week that Mr. Shultz planned to resign, some officials held open the possibility that he might change his mind once the furor subsided.

Asked why he had continued to urge moderate Arab countries to refrain from sending arms to Iran, Mr. Shultz said his information on the operation was "fragmentary," and added:

"Second, our policy so far as arms shipments is concerned remains. There hasn't been any flood of U.S. arms to Iran as seems to be implied, as far as I understand."